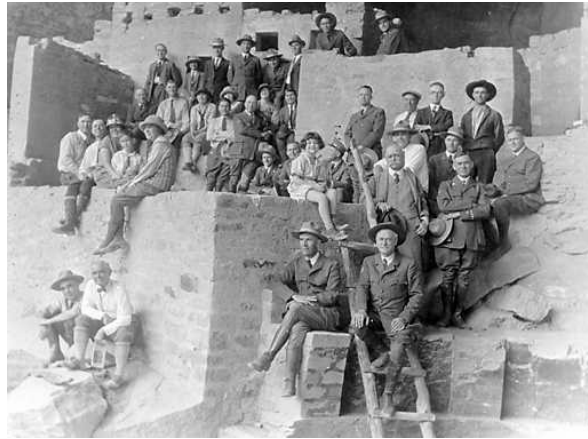




## Experience Your America



Superintendent's Conference,  
October 1925, Mesa Verde  
National Park.

### The National Park Service

The national park concept is generally credited to the artist George Catlin. On a trip to the Dakotas in 1832, he worried about the impact of America's westward expansion on Indian civilization, wildlife, and wilderness. They might be preserved, he wrote, "by some great protecting policy of government... in a magnificent park.... A nation's park, containing man and beast, in all the wild and freshness of their nature's beauty!"

### "...For the Benefit and Enjoyment of the People."

Catlin's vision was partly realized in 1864, when Congress donated Yosemite Valley to California for preservation as a state park. Eight years later, in 1872, Congress reserved the spectacular Yellowstone country in the Wyoming and Montana territories "as a public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." With no state government there yet to receive and manage it, Yellowstone remained in the custody of the U.S. Department of the Interior as a national park—the world's first area so designated.

By 1916 the Interior Department was responsible for 14 national parks and 21 national monuments but had no organization to manage them. The parks were also vulnerable to competing interests, including some within the ascendant conservation movement. Utilitarian conservationists favoring regulated use rather than strict preservation of natural resources advocated the construction of dams by public authorities for water supply, power, and irrigation purposes. While utilitarian conservation had become well represented in government by the U.S. Geological Survey and the Forest and Reclamation services, no comparable bureau spoke for park preservation in Washington. Among those recognizing the problem was Stephen T. Mather, a wealthy and well-connected Chicago businessman. When Mather complained to Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane about the parks' mismanagement, Lane invited him to Washington as his assistant for park matters. Twenty-five-year-old Horace M. Albright became Mather's principal aide upon Mather's arrival in 1915.

Mather and Albright strongly crusaded for a national parks bureau, and on August 25, 1916, Congress responded as desired, with President Woodrow Wilson approving legislation creating the National Park Service within the Interior Department. Secretary Lane named Mather the Park Service's first director and Albright assistant director. A policy letter approved by Lane in 1918 elaborated on the bureau's dual mission of conserving park resources and providing for their enjoyment.

Through the 1920s the national park system was really a western park system. Only Acadia National Park in Maine lay east of the Mississippi. But the Park Service's greatest opportunity in the East lay in another realm—that of history and historic sites. Congress had directed the War Department to preserve a number of historic battlefields, forts, and memorials there as national military parks and monuments, beginning in 1890 with Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park in Georgia and Tennessee. After succeeding Mather as director in 1929, Albright was instrumental in getting Congress to establish three new historical parks in the East under Park Service administration. Colonial National Monument, Virginia, which included Yorktown Battlefield, and Morristown National Historical Park, New Jersey, the site of Revolutionary War encampments, edged the Park Service into the War Department's domain.

## Vicksburg National Military Park



Vicksburg National Military Park  
Visitor Center

Soon after Franklin D. Roosevelt took office in 1933, Albright accompanied the new president on a trip to Shenandoah National Park and mentioned his desire to acquire all the military parks. Roosevelt agreed and directed Albright to initiate an executive transfer order. Under the order, effective August 10, 1933, the Park Service received not only the War Department's parks and monuments but the 15 national monuments then held by the Forest Service as well as the national capital parks, including the Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, and White House. The addition of nearly 50 historical areas in the East made the park system and Park Service truly national and deeply involved with historic as well as natural preservation.

The *enabling legislation* which created Vicksburg National Military Park on February 21, 1899, called for the restoration of the forts and lines of fortifications, to mark the lines of battle and other points of interest with tablets, and permit any State that had troops engaged in the campaign, siege, or defense of the city of Vicksburg from March 29-July 4, 1863 to erect monuments in honor of its troops.

The park as established in 1899 encompassed the entire area of the siege and defense lines around the city and included the headquarters site of Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, the Union commander at Vicksburg. In 1964, the park boundary was adjusted as the lower one-third of the park was transferred to the City of Vicksburg.

In 1990, Senate Bill S.2437 authorized the National Park Service to accept a donation of the remaining vestige of Grant's Canal for incorporation into the park and broadened the interpretive mandate to include the operations from April 1862 to July 4, 1863, and the history of Vicksburg under Union occupation during the Civil War and period of Reconstruction.

Today the park encompasses 1,800 acres and is one of the more densely monumented battlefields in the world as 1,324 monuments, markers, tablets, and plaques dot the historic landscape.

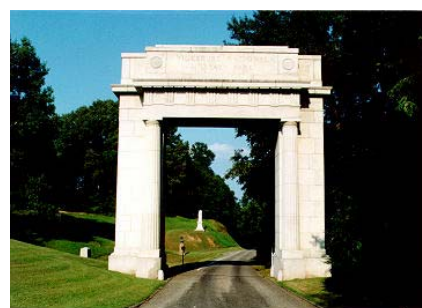
In addition to the largest collection of outdoor sculpture in the southeastern United States, the park also preserves nine historic fortifications, over 20 miles of reconstructed trenches, approaches and parallels, 15 historic bridges, 5 historic buildings (one ante-bellum home), 141 historic cannon and carriages, a visitor center, the U.S.S. *Cairo* gunboat and museum, 17 miles of hard-surfaced roads and the Vicksburg National Cemetery with over 17,000 interments, the largest number of Civil War soldiers of any national cemetery in the United States.

Vicksburg National Military Park exists as a lasting memorial to the soldiers and civilians that suffered through the widespread tragedy and conflict of the Civil War. It is a vivid legacy of America's past, a place where students can learn and individuals reflect upon the dramatic events that shaped a young and developing nation. This is exemplified in the Vicksburg National Military Park's Mission Statement:

*"To commemorate the campaign, siege and defense of Vicksburg and restore, protect, preserve, and interpret the unique cultural resources of Vicksburg National Military Park and Vicksburg National Cemetery; including the historic topography, earthen forts, parallels, approaches, and lines of fortification; monuments, markers, tablets, and plaques; cannon; Memorial Arch; US gunboat Cairo; Shirley House; remaining vestige of Grant's Canal; archival and artifact collections; headquarter sites of Generals Grant and Pemberton and other locations within the park or its vicinity; and provide road access for park use; and ensure that the City of Vicksburg and Warren County maintain the parklike character of former park lands."*



Illinois State Memorial



Memorial Arch

Texas State  
Memorial



Iowa Regimental  
Marker, Vicksburg  
National Cemetery